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Glimpses of a Poet's Workshop

By LOUISE GRAY ZERWER*

A NOTE TO THE READER

Close your eyes! Imagine three circles, one larger than the next. Stand them upright, one on top of the other. What do you see? Could it be a snowman?

Again place the circles together. This time put the smallest one within the other two. What do you see now? Could it be a wheel?

Now you have two distinct forms in your mind. Do you know how to tell others exactly what you see? Could you show by a drawing or a painting the shapes that appear to you alone? Or could you think of notes of music that say *snow man* and *wheel*? Perhaps you can put words together that express precisely the forms you see with your mind's eye.

To flash forms and shapes from one mind to another is an art. All artists use materials: paint, musical notes, stone, wood, bronze, words, etc. A poet uses words.

Emily Dickinson, the American poet, wrote:

"A word is dead
When it is said
Some say,
I say it just
Begins to live
That day."

* Mrs. Zerwer, who teaches English at Morton Township High School in Cicero, gives us brief glimpses of the "workshop" of Emily Dickinson, showing how the simple circumstances of Miss Dickinson's life contributed to her poetry, and also how the word choice in each poem helps to give it its perfect unity. Some of your students will enjoy such a visit with Miss Dickinson, and you yourself will find that Mrs. Zerwer's mode of not-too-detailed analysis can be applied in your teaching of many poems by other poets.

The poem "The Angle of a Landscape" is printed by special arrangement with Harper and Brothers, Publishers.

With living words she gave form to her thoughts ; with living words she painted pictures of what she saw ; with living words she made music of the sounds she heard.

In this selection of twenty-five of her fifteen hundred published poems, come share with me her vivid pictures, melodies, and meanings.

WITH WORDS THE POET PAINTS PICTURES FOR US.

Let's See!

"The seasons shift my picture"

EMILY DICKINSON

In a brick mansion on Maine Street in the college town of Amherst, Massachusetts, where she was born in 1830, Emily Dickinson lived all but fifteen years of her life.

Between my curtain is one of many references to her own room ; for this was her sanctuary where she wrote poetry in secrecy and where, after her death in 1886, Lavinia, her sister, found the manuscripts of more than fifteen hundred poems in the bureau drawer.

Venetian alludes to the fifteenth century school of painting in Venice, noted for its use of rich colors.

Just as a painter repeats his colors to emphasize one image, Emily repeats *bough, finger, hill, chimney* in this silhouette.

The angle of a landscape
That every time I wake
Between my curtain and the wall
Upon an ample crack

Like a Venetian waiting,
Accosts my open eye,
Is just a bough of apples
Held slanting in the sky,

The pattern of a chimney,
The forehead of a hill,
Sometimes a vane's forefinger—
But that's occasional.

The seasons shift my picture.
Upon my emerald bough
I wake to find no emeralds ;
Then diamonds which the snow

From polar caskets fetched me.
 The chimney and the hill
 And just the steeple's finger
 These never stir at all.

* * *

Emily enjoyed words. She studied her dictionary to find the precise word to express her exact meaning. Boldly she combined words to flash her images, sounds, ideas on the mind of another.

Here ordinary words become extraordinary when they merge to quicken the imagination. *Green chill, emerald ghost, electric moccasin* work together just as the streaks of color of the Impressionist painters, among whom are Degas, Monet, Constable, merge in the mind to create one color.

There came a wind like a bugle;
 It quivered through the grass,
 And a green chill upon the heat
 So ominous did pass
 We barred the windows and the doors
 As from an emerald ghost;
 The doom's electric moccasin
 That very instant passed.
 On a strange mob of panting trees,
 And fences fled away,

And rivers where the houses ran
 The living looked that day
 The bell within the steeple wild
 The flying tidings whirled.
 How much can come
 And much can go,
 And yet abide in the world!

* * *

Sound effects help to create the impression of this storm. Animated words: *chuckled, whistled, shook, gnashed, swung*, convey the frenzy of the creatures exposed.

Spectre's cloak and monster's faded eyes, awful, gaunt, mashed, strike terror to the heart.

This poem has a strong beginning.

An awful tempest mashed the air,
 The clouds were gaunt and few;
 A black, as of a spectre's cloak,
 Hid heaven and earth from view.

The creatures chuckled on the roofs
 And whistled in the air,
 And shook their fists and gnashed their teeth,
 And swung their frenzied hair.

The morning lit, the birds arose;
 The monster's faded eyes
 Turned slowly to his native coast,
 And peace was Paradise!

* * *

This picture of "Lady Moon" is a still-life. The center of interest is the detailed description of the face.

The arrangement of the subjects: *her perfect face, her bonnet, her shoe, the trinkets, her dimities* is harmonious.

Gold, blond, beryl, amber, silver, blue tint the picture appropriately.

The moon was but a chin of gold
 A night or two ago,
 And now she turns her perfect face
 Upon the world below.

Her forehead is of amplest blond;
 Her cheek like beryl stone;
 Her eye unto the summer dew
 The likest I have known.

Her lips of amber never part;
 But what must be the smile
 Upon her friend she could bestow
 Were such her silver will!

And what a privilege to be
 But the remotest star!
 For certainly her way might pass
 Beside your twinkling door.

Her bonnet is the firmament,
 The universe her shoe,
 The stars the trinkets at her belt,
 Her dimities of blue.

* * *

In spite of the fairyland of flowers growing in her conservatory—purple heliotrope, yellow jasmine, and cape jasmine, to name a few, Emily longed for summer and the out-of-doors.

Deep in Parian is the dead of winter time. Paros is an island in the Aegean Sea noted for its beautiful marble.

Eventually seems a long way off. The *bright bouquet* of summer is a mental picture composed of images of anticipated beauty: the lilacs, the bees, the wild rose, the aster, the gentian.

Just as a painting by a Modernist has an idea or intellectual meaning, the poet's picture of summer suggests her reverence for the miracle of nature.

It will be Summer eventually—
Ladies with parasols,
Sauntering gentlemen with canes,
And little girls with dolls

Will tint the pallid landscape
As 'twere a bright bouquet,
Though drifted deep in Parian
The village lies today.

The lilacs, bending many a year,
Will sway with purple load ;
The bees will not despise the tune
Their forefathers have hummed ;

The wild rose redden in the bog,
The aster on the hill
Her everlasting fashion set,
And covenant gentians frill,

Till summer folds her miracle
As women do their gown,
Or priests adjust the symbols
When sacrament is done.

WITH WORDS THE POET MAKES MUSIC FOR US!

Let's Listen!

*"The definition of melody
Is that definition is none."*

EMILY DICKINSON

One day Emily sent this poem to her nephew, Ned, who lived in the house "a hedge away." With it was one of the cocoons she kept in her conservatory.

Another boy, Mac Jenkins, who later wrote a book about her, saw Emily in the process of writing the poem, "The Butterfly's

Assumption-Gown," as together they watched a butterfly emerge from a cocoon.

The low, austere tones suit the idea of the cocoon as a tomb. *M's*, *O's*, *A's*, and *T's* make the word music.

Drab habitation of whom?
 Tabernacle or tomb,
 Or dome of worm,
 Or porch of gnome,
 Or some elf's catacomb?

* * *

To the children Emily was playmate and friend. She kept them supplied with sweets in a hide-and-seek sort of way. One day a brown basket tied to a string descended upon them as they played beneath her window. In it were gingerbread, cookies, and caramels, her specialty. Or a note of a mysterious nature would appear with a box of sweets for them. One note read:

"Omit to return box. Omit to know that you received box.
 Brooks of Sheffield"

She shared the flowers from her conservatory and from her garden with her friends and neighbors. Sometimes she sent flowers with a poem to a sick friend.

The words of this song are in perfect balance. Repetition of phrases and letters and active words make the music.

As children bid the guest good-night,
 And then reluctant turn,
 My flowers raise their pretty lips,
 Then put their nightgowns on.

As children caper when they wake,
 Merry that it is morn,
 My flowers from a hundred cribs
 Will peep, and prance again.

* * *

Bible study was school work, Sunday work, and home work in New England at the time Emily lived. She enjoyed the poetry of the Bible and was especially fond of the Book of Revelation. Many of her poems contain names of Biblical characters, such as Elijah, Moses, Abraham, and of course, Jesus.

The Lord's Supper is an example of a religious ceremony known as a sacrament.

In this chant, the slow movement expresses the poet's childlike wonder and feeling of reverence.

These are the days when birds come back,
A very few, a bird or two,
To take a backward look.

These are the days when skies put on
The old, old sophistries of June,—
A blue and gold mistake.

Oh, fraud that cannot cheat the bee,
Almost thy plausibility
Induces my belief.

Till ranks of seeds their witness bear,
And softly through the altered air
Hurries a timid leaf!

Oh, sacrament of summer days,
Oh, last communion in the haze
Permit a child to join.

Thy sacred emblems to partake,
Thy consecrated bread to break,
Taste thine immortal wine!

* * *

Emily chose to dress in white. Frequently she wore a colorful stole, and always she had flowers about her.

In this hymn sung in praise of the universe and its creator, the first line is striking. Vigorous, active words command and question. It suggests God's voice in the book of Job in the Bible.

The poem moves in crescendo from the poet's tone of joy in the miracles of the universe to her hope of finding what lies beyond. The end rhyme "points up" her ecstasy.

Alban house probably refers to her white dress. An Alb is a white linen vestment with close sleeves worn at the Eucharist, the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

Bring me the sunset in a cup,
Reckon the morning's flagons up,
And say how many dew ;
Tell me how far the morning leaps,
Tell me what time the weaver sleeps
Who spun the breadths of blue!

Write me how many notes there be
 In the new robin's ecstasy
 Among astonished boughs;
 How many trips the tortoise makes,
 How many cups the bee partakes,—
 The debauchee of dews!

Also, who laid the rainbow's piers,
 Also, who leads the docile spheres
 By withes of supple blue?
 Whose fingers string the stalactite,
 Who counts the wampum of the night,
 To see that none is due?

Who built this little Alban house
 And shut the windows down so close
 My spirit cannot see?
 Who'll let me out some gala day,
 With implements to fly away,
 Passing pomposity?

* * *

Emily's father was a distinguished lawyer and member of Congress. For forty years he was the treasurer of Amherst College, which his father, Samuel Fowler Dickinson, had founded. Except for the years 1840-1855, when they lived at North Pleasant Street, the Dickinsons occupied the stately house Grandfather Dickinson had build. The afternoon before Mr. Dickinson went to Washington, where he died, Emily sat with him and played the piano for him.

Just as a piano sonata begins with a moderately slow, flowing movement, then quickens to a fast movement, then becomes slow again, this poem presents the gathering storm, the torrential rain, the after-effects of the electrical storm.

Active words compose the theme: *began to rock, flung, unhooked, did scoop, throw, quickened, put up, fled, wrecked, over-looked.*

The wind begun to rock the grass
 With threatening tunes and low,—
 He flung a menace at the earth,
 A menace at the sky.

The leaves unhooked themselves from trees
 And started all abroad;
 The dust did scoop itself like hands
 And throw away the road.

The wagons quickened on the streets,
 The thunder hurried slow;
 The lightning showed a yellow beak,
 And then a livid claw.

The birds put up the bars to nests,
 The cattle fled to barns;
 There came one drop of giant rain,
 And then, as if the hands

That held the dams had parted hold,
 The waters wrecked the sky,
 But overlooked my father's house,
 Just quartering a tree.

WITH WORDS THE POET STRIKES OUR FANCY.

Let's Imagine!

• *"Too much proof affronts Belief,"*

EMILY DICKINSON

Today the coaxial network which brings television from the East to the West is a momentous development, even as the coming of the Belchertown Railroad was to the people of Amherst.

Emily wrote to her brother in 1852: "Since we have written you, the grand railroad decision is made, and there is great rejoicing throughout this town and the neighboring; that is, Sunderland, Montague, and Belchertown. The event was celebrated by cannon. Father is really sober from excessive satisfaction and wears his honors with a most becoming air. Nobody believes it yet, it seems like a fairy tale, a most miraculous event in the lives of us all."

Then she wrote this poem. Through the magnifying glass of her imagination, she could see every movement of the train. It acted so much like a monstrous, living animal that, to her, it became one—a horse. Boanerges means sons-of-Thunder.

She transferred her fancy to our minds by images. The words: *prodigious, supercilious, complaining, punctual, docile, and omnipotent*, suggest a spoiled pet. The phrases: *lap the miles, lick the valley up*, etc., suggest the racing animal and at the same time keep the train in full view.

I like to see it lap the miles,
 And lick the valleys up,
 And stop to feed itself at tanks;
 And, then, prodigious, step

Around a pile of mountains,
 And, supercilious, peer
 In shanties by the sides of roads;
 And then a quarry pare

To fit its sides, and crawl between,
 Complaining all the while
 In horrid hooting stanza;
 Then chase itself down hill

And neigh like Boanerges;
 Then, punctual as a star,
 Stop—docile and omnipotent—
 At its own stable door.

* * *

Emily loved a mystery. Her television or movie screen was her mind. Ramshackle houses are easily peopled with ghosts, murderers and bandits. She imagined two robbers at work while an old couple slept.

As in a scene from a melodrama, everyone is aware of the villain but the characters in the play.

Long lines combined with short ones create suspense, along with the I'm-in-the-know attitude of inanimate things: the clock, the walls, the spectacles, the almanac, the mat, the star, the moon, and the sun.

I know some lonely houses off the road
 A robber'd like the look of,—
 Wooden barred,
 And windows hanging low,
 Inviting to
 A portico,

Where two could creep:
 One hand the tools,
 The other peep
 To make sure all's asleep.
 Old fashioned eyes,
 Not easy to surprise!

How orderly the kitchen'd look by night,
With just a clock,—
But they could gag the tick,
And mice won't bark;
And so the walls don't tell,
None will.

A pair of spectacles ajar just stir—
An almanac's aware.
Was it the mat that winked,
Or a nervous star?
The moon slides down the stair
To see who's there.

There's plunder,—where?
Tankard, or spoon,
Earring, or stone,
A watch, some ancient brooch
To match the grandmamma,
Staid sleeping there.

Day rattles, too,
Stealth's slow;
The sun has got as far
As the third sycamore.
Screams chanticleer,
"Who's there?"

And echoes, trains away,
Sneer—"Where?"
While the old couple, just astir,
Think that sunrise left the door ajar!

* * *

What an animated cartoon this would make! The arrival, visit, and departure of the unseen guest in five stanzas is sheer entertainment.

Here the poet amplifies sounds in her imagination. The wind *tapped like a tired man, his speech was like a push of numerous humming birds*, his fingers played music on a glass instrument. (There is an orchestra in existence made up of glass instruments.)

Part of the fun here is in imagining a *footless guest*, the impossibility of *hand a sofa to the air*, a guest without bones or face.

The wind tapped like a tired man,
 And like a host, "Come in,"
 I boldly answered; entered then
 My residence within

A rapid, footless guest,
 To offer whom a chair
 Were as impossible as hand
 A sofa to the air.

No bone had he to bind him,
 His speech was like the push
 Of numerous humming-birds at once
 From a superior bush.

His countenance a billow,
 His fingers, if he pass,
 Let go a music, as of tunes
 Blown tremulous in glass.

He visited, still flitting;
 Then, like a timid man,
 Again he tapped—'twas flurriedly—
 And I became alone.

* * *

To her cousin, Louisa, Emily wrote in 1874: "Life is a spell so exquisite that every thing conspires to break it."

One of her poems begins: "To be alive is power." In another she wrote: "Beauty crowds me till I die."

The town gossip who asked Mattie what her aunt did to occupy her time could not know how busy Emily was writing and living what she wrote about.

With an imagination as rich as Ali Baba's treasure, Emily dramatized the sunshine after the rain with such images as: *kissed the eaves, gables laugh, orchards spangles hung, a pearl necklace.*

A drop fell on the apple tree,
 Another on the roof;
 A half a dozen kissed the eaves,
 And made the gables laugh.

A few went out to help the brook,
 That went to help the sea.
 Myself conjectured, Were they pearls,
 What necklaces could be!

The dust replaced in hoisted roads,
 The birds jocosely sung;
 The sunshine threw his hat away,
 The orchards spangles hung.

The breezes brought dejected lutes,
 And bathed them in the glee;
 The East put out a single flag,
 And signed the fête away.

* * *

To Colonel Higginson Emily wrote in 1862: "When I state myself, as the representative of the verse, it does not mean me, but a supposed person."

Whether or not Emily saw a ghost is unimportant. Unrelated images compose the poem: *mechlin* (Belgian lace), *snow*, *bird*, *roe*, *mosaic*, *mistletoe*, *breeze*.

The ghost begins to take form when it appears dressed in *mechlin* and steps without sandals like flakes of snow. It was swift and silent as a bird and roe. Mosaic suggests lace and snowflakes. Mistletoe brings with it a suggestion of snow and lace gently swaying in the breeze. Together the images create this poem of fancy.

The only ghost I ever saw
 Was dressed in *mechlin*,—so;
 He wore no sandals on his foot,
 And stepped like flakes of snow.
 His gait was soundless, like the bird,
 But rapid, like the roe;
 His fashions quaint, mosaic,
 Or, haply, mistletoe.

His conversation seldom,
 His laughter like the breeze
 That dies away in dimples
 Among the pensive trees.
 Our interview was transient,—
 Of me, himself was shy;
 And God forbid I look behind
 Since that appalling day!

WITH WORDS THE POET TELLS US HER SECRETS.

Let's Sympathize!

*"If I can stop one heart from breaking,
I shall not live in vain"*

EMILY DICKINSON

In 1848 Emily wrote to Abiah Strong:

"The older I grow, the more do I love spring and spring flowers. While at home there were several pleasure parties of which I was a member, and in our rambles we found many and beautiful children of spring,—the trailing arbutus, adder's tongue, yellow violets, liver-wort, blood-root, and other smaller flowers."

In this poem simple words arranged in a conversational tone transfuse this love of flowers for the sake of their beauty.

Yellow bonnet, hock and sherry draw, clover rows bring flowers to life with their color and heady fragrance.

Perhaps you'd like to buy a flower?
But I could never sell.
If you would like to borrow
Until the daffodil

Unties her yellow bonnet
Beneath the village door,
Until the bees, from clover rows
Their hock and sherry draw,

Why, I will lend until just then,
But not an hour more!

* * *

During Emily's lifetime only four of her poems were published. This was one. When her sister-in-law, Sue, showed the printed poem to Emily, she became pale and turned away. Although some of her friends and Sue saw many of her poems and recognized them as the work of genius, she steadily refused to publish them. The first two lines of one of Emily's poems on that subject are:

"Publication is the auction
Of the mind of man."

Emily's friend, Dr. Holland, wondered how she knew snakes prefer a boggy acre. Poets and children have a way of knowing things.

Zero at the bone is an original way of describing muscular tension. Placed at the end, the phrase is forceful.

A narrow fellow in the grass
Occasionally rides;
You may have met him,—did you not?
His notice sudden is.

The grass divides as with a comb,
A spotted shaft is seen;
And then it closes at your feet
And opens further on.

He likes a boggy acre,
A floor too cool for corn.
Yet when a child, and barefoot,
I more than once at morn,

Have passed, I thought, a whip-lash
Unbraiding in the sun,—
When, stooping to secure it,
It wrinkled, and was gone.

Several of nature's people
I know, and they know me;
I feel for them a transport
Of cordiality;

But never met this fellow,
Attended or alone,
Without a tighter breathing,
And zero at the bone.

* * *

Emily wrote: "Beauty crowds me till I die." To praise the beauty of nature is to praise God, who created beauty.

Yieldeth, taketh away my will, addeth is simple, Biblical language appropriate to a song of reverence.

The murmur of a bee
A witchcraft yieldeth me.
If any asks me why,
'Twere easier to die
Than tell.

The red upon the hill
 Taketh away my will;
 If anybody sneer,
 Take care, for God is here,—
 That's all.

The breaking of the day
 Addeth to my degree;
 If any ask me how,
 Artist, who drew me so,
 Must tell!

* * *

In 1870 Emily stated in a letter to Colonel Higginson, whom she regarded as her critic:

"I find ecstasy in living; the mere sense of living is joy enough."

And in 1871 she wrote:

"To live is so startling, it leaves little room for other occupations though friends are, if possible, an event more fair."

In 1886 Emily died of Bright's disease. Colonel Higginson read one of her favorite poems by Emily Brontë at her grave. He said she looked very youthful and serene in death.

Here simple words contain the emotion of one who does not want to leave what he loves: *my garden yet, quite the strength, I, so shy, Hillsides must not know.*

I have not told my garden yet,
 Lest that should conquer me;
 I have not quite the strength now
 To break it to the bee.

I will not name it in the street,
 For shops would stare, that I,
 So shy, so very ignorant,
 Should have the face to die.

The hillsides must not know it,
 Where I have rambled so,
 Nor tell the loving forests
 The day that I shall go,

Nor lisp it at the table,
 Nor heedless by the way
 Hint that within the riddle
 One will walk to-day!

* * *

In 1851 Emily wrote to her brother Austin: "Home is a holy thing—nothing of doubt or distrust can enter its blessed portals."

To her friend, Mrs. Strong, she wrote in 1852: "You asked me to come and see you—I must speak of that. I thank you, Abiah, but I don't go from home unless emergency leads me by the hand, and then I do it obstinately and draw back if I can."

For home meant Austin, Lavinia, Mother, Father, Carlo, books, flowers, birds, Sue, the three children, and a room of her own.

In *Emily Dickinson, Face to Face*, Martha, Emily's niece, portrays her aunt as the lovely spirit of her family. She was always gay, charming, stimulating. She was the one they all depended upon for comfort.

Homebody robins expressed her feelings.

In this poem each word harmonizes with the tone of the whole poem. *Interrupts* and *overflows* suggest prodigiously joyful work under way. *Speechless* points directly to contentment while the work is in the doing. *Cherubic* and *sanctity* rank the family with the highest.

The robin is the one
That interrupts the morn
With hurried, few, express reports
When March is scarcely one.

The robin is the one
That overflows the noon
With her cherubic quantity,
An April but begun.

The robin is the one
That speechless from her nest
Submits that home and certainty
And sanctity are best.

WITH WORDS THE POET MAKES US THINK.

Let's Challenge Her!

"I found the phrase to every thought
I ever had but one"

EMILY DICKINSON

In 1856, when Emily was twenty-six years old, a book was published. This book had been written between the years 1630 and

1650 by one of the Pilgrim Fathers, Governor Bradford. It was called *Of Plymouth Plantation*.

Lost all those years, the book gave a realistic picture of the people who came to America from England in 1620.

The word *pilgrim* took on a new meaning. Governor Bradford described these people as progressive men and women of courage, conviction, enthusiasms, boldness, curiosity. They were not Puritans.

In this poem the *little pilgrim* is a curious child who thirsts for knowledge. Her questions are framed in muted end rhymes to express uncertainty. The last stanza is a plea, suggesting the hopelessness of getting the answer from man.

Will there really be a morning?
Is there such a thing as day?
Could I see it from the mountains
If I were as tall as they?

Has it feet like water-lilies?
Has it feathers like a bird,
Is it brought from famous countries
Of which I have never heard?

Oh, some scholar! Oh, some sailor!
Oh, some wise man from the skies!
Please to tell a little pilgrim
Where the place called morning lies!

* * *

In a letter to Colonel Higginson, Emily wrote of her books and her father: "He buys me many books, but begs me not to read them, because he fears they joggle the mind."

She did read them and all those that she could get hold of. Dickens, George Eliot, Emily Brontë, the Brownings, Shakespeare, and the Bible are named as favorites in her letters.

When she was a very young girl, her friends placed books in special hiding places for her in high secrecy.

In eight short lines Emily compresses a statement of her high regard for the inspiration of a book. *Spirit grew robust* and *bequest of wings* are refreshing phrases to suggest the idea that books feed the imagination and provide escape into one's best self.

He ate and drank the precious words,
 His spirit grew robust;
 He knew no more that he was poor,
 Nor that his frame was dust.
 He danced along the dingy days,
 And this bequest of wings
 Was but a book. What liberty
 A loosened spirit brings!

* * *

Audubon, the nineteenth century woodsman artist, followed the birds up and down the American continent to paint them in their native environment. He was the first to paint the rattlesnake invading the nest of the mockingbird.

His chief interest was, like Emily's, to recreate the bird rather than to contribute to scientific thought.

Here is a close-up view of a bird seeking food at perfect ease in his natural environment. Realistic images: *bit an angle-worm in halves, ate the fellow raw, let a beetle pass, unrolled his feathers*, reveal the bird's actions until he is out of sight.

The muted rhyme in the last three stanzas separates the poet's impressions from her factual report of the first two stanzas where the end rhyme is normal.

Plashless suits the effect of soundlessness in the last stanza.

A bird came down the walk;
 He did not know I saw;
 He bit an angle-worm in halves
 And ate the fellow, raw.

And then he drank a dew
 From a convenient grass,
 And then hopped sidewise to the wall
 To let a beetle pass.

He glanced with rapid eyes
 That hurried all abroad,—
 They looked like frightened beads, I thought
 He stirred his velvet head

Like one in danger; cautious,
 I offered him a crumb,
 And he unrolled his feathers
 And rowed him softer home

Than oars divide the ocean,
 Too silver for a seam,
 Or butterflies, off banks of noon,
 Leap, plashless, as they swim.

* * *

In March, 1872, Emily wrote to her cousin Louisa :

"Spring is a happiness so beautiful, so unique, so unexpected that I don't know what to do with my heart. I dare not take it, I dare not leave it—what do you advise?"

This thoughtful lyric presents a picture of hints of spring. The end rhyme completes the factual observations of each of the first three stanzas. In the last stanza the muted end rhyme expresses her pensive mood and thought : eternal life is natural.

A lady red upon the hill
 Her annual secret keeps ;
 A lady white within the field
 In placid lily sleeps !

The tidy breezes with their brooms
 Sweep vale, and hill, and tree !
 Prithee, my pretty housewives !
 Who may expected be ?

The neighbors do not yet suspect !
 The woods exchange a smile—
 Orchard, and buttercup, and bird—
 In such a little while !

And yet how still the landscape stands,
 How nonchalant the wood,
 As if the resurrection
 Were nothing very odd !

* * *

Actually Emily spent one year at Mount Holyoke Seminary located ten miles from Amherst. She visited friends in Philadelphia, went to Boston to see an eye specialist, and spent a few weeks in Washington, D. C. For the most part, then, she depended upon the reports of her friends, Marie Whitney and Samuel Bowles, who went abroad, and upon the letters of her father's friend, Mrs. Eastman, who lived abroad, for first-hand descriptions of faraway places.

In this almost perfectly balanced lyric, the poet states with the force of an argument her belief in the existence of the unseen.

The word *moor* suggests a faraway place. It means an extensive area of waste ground overlaid with peat. *Wuthering Heights*, a novel by Emily's much-admired Emily Brontë, takes place in the moors of England.

I never saw a moor,
I never saw the sea ;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.
I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven ;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

Program of the Fall Meeting

If you have not already made a hotel reservation for the October 2 and 3 meeting of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English, be sure to do so at once, as patrons of a non-conference football game will be your competitors for rooms. The program committee, with Charles Willard of Southern Illinois University High School as chairman, has planned the excellent program outlined below.

CONFERENCE FOR ELEMENTARY, JUNIOR HIGH, AND SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

October 2 and 3, 1953

University of Illinois, Urbana

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 1953

2:30 p.m. REGISTRATION

3:00-3:45 p.m. PANEL DISCUSSION: "Teaching Our Pupils to
Read: A Twelve-Year Process"

Wilmer A. Lamar, Decatur High School, Chairman
Edward W. Dolch, University of Illinois
Jean Fox, Decatur Public Library
Josephine A. Piekarz, University of Chicago
Ted R. Ragsdale, Southern Illinois University
Maurine Self, Jacksonville High School

3:45-5:00 p.m. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A. Remedial Reading in the Secondary School

Leader: Edward W. Dolch

Recorder: Esther Albrecht, Calvin Coolidge Junior High
School, Moline

B. The Role of the Library in Stimulating Reading

Leader: Jean Fox

Recorder: Phylita Shinneman, Moline Senior High School

C. Teaching Skills in High School Reading

Leader: Josephine A. Piekarz

Recorder:

D. Reading in the Elementary and Junior High School

Leader: Ted R. Ragsdale

Recorder: Barbara Garst, Moline Senior High School

E. Teaching Appreciation in Reading

Leader: Maurine Self

Recorder:

6:30 p.m. BANQUET

Address: "Language: Bridge or Barrier?"

JEROME C. HIXSON, DePauw University

9:00 p.m. BUSINESS MEETING, Executive Board and District
Leaders of the Illinois Association of Teachers
of English

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 1953

9:00-9:30 a.m. COFFEE HOUR AND REGISTRATION

9:45-11:15 a.m. GROUP DISCUSSIONS

I. Articulation of High School and College English

Leader: J. R. Hains, Northern Illinois State Teachers College

Consultant: Annette Gioannini, Bloom Township High School

Recorder: Alma M. Hoppe, Rochelle High School

II. New Techniques in Grammar and Composition

Leader: Fred Lingle, Southern Illinois University

Consultant: Cleveland A. Thomas, North Shore Country

Day School

Recorder: Marilyn Hagebush, Wilson Junior High School,

Decatur

III. Speech Training in the English Classroom

Leader: Jessie Frederick, East Moline High School

Consultant: Louise C. Waggoner, Macomb Senior High School

Recorder: Helen Bumgardner, Feitshans High School,

Springfield

IV. English Problems Peculiar to the Small High School

Leader: Florence A. Cook, Shabbona High School

Consultant: Mrs. Tressa Bennett, Kansas High School

Recorder: Mary Messner, Bismarck High School

V. What's New in the Literature of the Teaching of English?

Leader: Ruth Henline, Illinois State Normal University

Consultant: Isabel Hoover, Western Illinois State College

Recorder: Patricia Bard, Kenney High School

VI. Teaching Creative Writing

Leader: Marjorie Diez, Morton High School, Cicero

Consultant: Dena Saaijenga, Galesburg High School

Recorder: Velma O. Nave, Frankfort Community High School

VII. The Program in Literature

Leader: Anne Lauterbach, Maine Township High School

Consultant: Charlotte C. Whittaker, Evanston High School

Recorder: Mary Ann McKinney, York High School

11:15-11:45 a.m. BUSINESS MEETING, Illinois Association of
Teachers of English

12:15 p.m. LUNCHEON

Address: "Biography in the Teaching of English"

JEROME C. HIXSON

